

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. DIAZ-BALART] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. DIAZ-BALART addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. ABERCROMBIE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

#### PRESIDENT DUTY-BOUND TO BALANCE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine [Mr. LONGLEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LONGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I think one of the difficult things that Members of this Congress have to face is how to conceive of the extent of the national debt of this country. Given the budget negotiations that are ongoing, I think it might be prudent to call to the attention of the Members and of the Speaker the fact that as of 3 o'clock this afternoon, the national debt is \$4,988,891,675,281.12. That is the official figure from the Bureau of Public Debt and the Department of the Treasury.

It is next to impossible for many of us to conceive of how large a number that is, and frankly, it was difficult for me even to realize how difficult it was just to mount the number on a piece of wood. It is over 15 characters. In fact, the piece of lumber that Matthew and Lisa are holding in front of me is over 10 feet in length. Just to carry it from the office, I was unable to take it through the revolving door, leaving the Cannon Building. I was unable to use the elevator in this building; we had to work our way up the staircases, get some help from some of the security guards, just to navigate the normal hallways of Congress.

I think that with the negotiations that are ongoing and given the work that has been done in this Congress to attempt to devise a reasonable plan by which we can balance the Federal debt, I would like to urge, Mr. Speaker, that the President has a duty to this country and to this Congress, given the fact that the Republicans have come up with a 7-year plan to balance the Federal budget, a plan that has been certified by the Congressional Budget Office to be fiscally in balance, I feel it is incumbent on the President to give us his view of how he would balance the budget in 7 years.

It is not enough to criticize what we have done; I think the President is duty-bound to step to the plate and tell us what he would do. What are his priorities?

I have to say very frankly, Mr. Speaker, as a Member of this body who is an American first and a member of

his political party second, I would welcome the President's initiative, because I feel that as a Member of Congress I should have the right to choose between two competing points of view; and that is what this great Chamber is dedicated to, and that is what this great Chamber is being deprived of today by the failure of the administration to step forward and honestly tell us how they would balance the budget. Given the size of this debt, I think it is imperative that they do so.

Mr. Speaker, I did some quick calculations with a calculator just before I came on the floor. If I had a business that started at the time of the birth of Christ and spent \$1 million a day, I would still not spend even \$1 trillion. In fact, I would need just about another 11,000 years to even approach the figure that we have accumulated in terms of the national debt today.

Another way of looking at it is that over the next 7 years under a Republican or Democratic version of a budget, this Government could be spending \$12 or \$13 trillion. In effect, our national debt exceeds over 40 percent of every nickel and dime that this Government will spend over the next 7 years.

In tribute to Matthew and Lisa, who represent the youngsters of this country who literally and figuratively are carrying the burden of this debt, I think again it is incumbent upon us as adults and as responsible citizens to do our duty in the democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end on this note: Our hearts and prayers are all with the American service men and women who are being sent overseas and deployed into harm's way in Bosnia. I noted this morning that there was information from the White House to suggest that the President was planning to visit the troops in Bosnia once they were deployed following the peace treaty.

Again, I applaud and commend that initiative on the part of the President, but I would also suggest to the President that his duties as Commander in Chief and as President of this great country call on him to also come to the Congress and tell us honestly, Mr. Speaker, how he would balance the Nation's budget.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia [Ms. NORTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

#### MISPLACED BUDGET PRIORITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the remarks of my col-

league with regard to the national debt, and I certainly agree with him that we need to balance the budget. However, I would suggest that we all agree that the budget needs to be balanced, and in fact, the President has also said many times that he wants the budget balanced. The problem is how do we do it. That is where the priorities come into place.

One of the points that President Clinton has made and that I have made and that many of the Democratic leaders have made is that we have to look at this budget in human terms. What are the impacts? What do the numbers mean in real terms in terms of working American families, students, older Americans, the environment and many of the other priorities that President Clinton has articulated.

The bottom line is that if we look at the Republican budget that passed this House and the Senate and is now on the President's desk, the priorities are misplaced. Too much of the emphasis is on cutting taxes or on giving tax breaks primarily for wealthy Americans and not enough emphasis is being placed on helping the average working person. Many of the cuts are on programs for senior citizens, education, particularly for student loans for students that want to go on to colleges or universities, and for the environment.

One of the things that I keep pointing out is how much of the impact in terms of tax cuts or tax breaks go to wealthy Americans. According to the numbers of the Joint Committee on Taxation, 51 percent of taxpayers with incomes under \$30,000 would, as a group, have a net tax increase under the Republican budget plan and nearly half of the benefits under the Republican tax package or under the budget, 48 percent, that is, go to the top 12 percent of families, those with incomes of \$100,000 or more.

So we certainly want to balance the budget, but we want to do it in a way that does not give tax breaks to the wealthy and does not cut critical programs that are important to seniors, to students, and also to the environment, among other things.

One of the things that received a lot of attention today in this regard was the Medicaid Program. Medicaid was the health care program that the Federal Government and States pay for for low-income people. Nearly 37 million people are currently covered by Medicaid, and about half of them are children.

Well, surprisingly, in a way, but I am not surprised, because I know that doctors do care about health care for low-income people, today the American Medical Association, the main national association of physicians, came out with a statement that was very critical of the Republican Medicaid plan. Basically, they criticized the fact that under the Republican proposal as part of this budget, Medicaid would no longer be guaranteed, no longer be an entitlement, and it would be up to the